



Restore Academic Governance & Priorities: Unions Respond to the Faculties of the Future Interim Report

The Faculties of the Future project was outlined publicly for the first time in a [Discussion Paper](#) published in September 2024. Since then, the project has been the focus of [dozens of engagement events](#) supported by a large working group. In February 2025, an [Interim Report](#) was released that claimed to provide a “synthesis” of and “reflection” on this widespread engagement.

But what do reports associated with Faculties of the Future reveal? Do they mean a consensus exists in support of consolidating departments into larger units, reducing faculty and administrative roles, centralizing curriculum planning, and increasing class sizes? Or, rather, are they evidence of an attempt to create the impression that such a consensus exists when there is actually widespread opposition to those changes?

We believe the second is the case: the purported consensus does not exist. The engagement efforts summarized in the Faculties of the Future [Interim Report](#) obscure how York’s upper administration is implementing the Forward Action Plan without genuine collegial engagement and governance.

Collegial governance is being circumvented because neither Faculties of the Future nor any of the other restructuring projects in the Forward Action Plan grew out of discussion at Faculty Councils or at Senate. They are not pedagogical in nature. When the projects were officially submitted to the Board of Governors [on April 30, 2024](#), their stated purpose was to save \$200M over three years ([pp. 82-83](#)). In other words, they are cost-cutting measures that are externally imposed on the academic mission. The [Interim Report](#) does not identify an educational or academic issue that could provide a reason for discussing the Faculties of the Future project to begin with.

Collegial governance is also being circumvented because the restructuring projects in the Forward Action Plan are already being implemented. At [Glendon College](#), academic units have been closed or amalgamated, the diversity of course offerings has been reduced, fewer courses are taught by contract faculty, and staff positions have been eliminated. At the Keele campus, [enrolment in many programs has been suspended](#), already imposing some of the mergers and amalgamations envisioned in the Faculties of the Future.

These changes have also already resulted in job losses for contract faculty and staff. The [Interim Report](#) states that the changes being introduced “require a commitment [to] assign teaching to tenure stream faculty wherever possible whether inside or outside

their home unit” (p.9). What is written between the lines but evident to all is that assigning more teaching to tenure stream faculty reduces the work available to contract faculty. In the rolling budget presented to [LAPS Faculty Council on February 13, 2025](#), CUPE Unit 2 is targeted for significant cuts—their budget is reduced by 36.3% or \$8.2M over the next three years. Though the [Interim Report](#) frames job cuts as hypothetical possibilities for the future, [contract faculty](#) and staff know it is present reality. Since the main way the Faculties of the Future plan envisions cutting costs is by cutting positions, this shows in a nutshell the contradictions between financial and academic priorities and the problematic lack of transparency built into the Faculties of the Future plan. Cutting programs and courses, increasing class sizes, and shrinking staff- and faculty-to-student ratios are marks of a pedagogical sinkhole with predictably grave implications for York's reputation, morale, and educational quality. Preventing this erosion of academic standards in Ontario's public universities is why Faculty Councils and Senate are entrusted by law with responsibility for academic decision-making.

Finally, the [Interim Report](#) creates an impression of consensus only by omitting dissenting views. It does not engage the [extensive response from contract faculty](#) to the Discussion Paper and associated engagement events. In the rare instances where the [Interim Report](#) acknowledges that serious questions have been raised about Faculties of the Future proposals—such as the neglect of York’s founding commitment to social justice, the impoverishing of student experience, the loss of collegial ownership over academic planning—the Report severely downplays or dismisses them. Instead of taking the objections seriously, the [Interim Report](#) rewrites them as indirect endorsements. For example, the objection that restructuring does not foster interdisciplinarity is restated as a call to reduce the number of programs (p. 8). The [widespread outcry about recent program suspensions](#) and the devastating impact they have on marginalized groups suggests that is a gross misrepresentation.

The [Interim Report](#) creates the false impression that there is widespread collegial support for the projects of the Forward Action Plan. We should insist on a more truthful and compelling basis for cooperation and agreement—one that restores the priority of the academic and educational mission by offering smaller courses, more time for building relationships, more social engagement, and more support at a time when it is urgently needed. Those are the outcomes that collegial processes should strive for.

We understand that universities in Ontario are underfunded, and that York's management has made and continues to make costly mistakes with the university's funds. We are advocating that the resulting financial challenges be addressed responsibly, with transparency, through existing collegial governance frameworks, keeping the university's vision and academic priorities foremost. The Faculties of the Future plan does not pass this test.

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